

# CAREER GUIDANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE TRAVESTY

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## Abstract

This article covers the subject of career guidance in South Africa. The education of the black people is contextualized in social injustices from the time of the system of apartheid to the present day. The question this research answered was: How do the experiences of career fairs for students living in poor communities contribute to innovative models for provision of socially just career guidance? The methodology was qualitative-phenomenological with the auto-ethnographic case design. The apartheid system was designed to hold back black people. The architect of that system once declared a political and systematized exclusion of the black child through the Bantu education system for the black people who were neglected. In this article I show how career guidance was a system used by the government to marginalize the black child. Even today, psychology is still used as a tool to subjugate black students. A great majority of them do not access educational programs in disciplines such as psychology with a consequence of a smaller number of black lecturers in the field of career guidance. This journey of social injustice lies at the center of the educational system to this day, and as a measure towards decolonization and inclusion, the status quo has to change because it is a social justice travesty.

**Keywords:** Career guidance, social justice, youth unemployment, travesty

## Introduction

The “political phenomenon” dominated traditional South African education, where education for the blacks from the 1650s, the 1800s and the natives of the 1920s to the present, was characterized by social injustice concerning native education that referred only to the black child and “[...] was characterized by a rapid structural deterioration of the black schools” (Jansen, 1990: 196). The apartheid government “has used higher education as a tool to promote a separate development policy” (Nkomo, 1981: 126) which led to the development of Bantu Education for (black Africans). It was President, Hendrik Verwoerd, known as the 1953 architect of apartheid, who said

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that “there is no place [for the African] in the European community [white] above the level of certain forms of labour” (in Flederman, 2011: 22). According to Verwoerd, the African black child, should not have opportunities to be educated at levels above the artisan and should only remain as a laborer, without access to university education:

There is no space for him [the “native”] in the European Community over certain forms of labour...for this reason, it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European Community, where it cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the greener pastures of the European society in which he was not allowed to graze (in Molteno, 1984: 92-93).

As a result of Bantu education, the black child with lower quality education remained in a systematized and sustainable “poverty trap” (Spaull, 2015: 35). The poverty of the country’s black people can be directly linked to apartheid (Seekings, 2011), because “in South Africa, institutionalized discrimination has exacerbated poverty and inequality” (Viljoen & Maseko, 2013: 74). The poverty trap is the “strongest legacy of ineffective social capital and blocked opportunities” for a black child (Adato et al., 2004: 1), since “the school system that serves 80% of the population is built on weak foundations and continues to provide poor quality learning outcomes” (Taylor & Muller, 2014: 226), the black child does not have to do anything with mathematics and science, therefore, does not need to study them.

Career guidance in South Africa is supposed to be subsumed under life orientation; it suffers the same misfortune as Bantu education. According to Lara Kay and David Fretwell (2003), “Prior to 1990, the Department of Manpower (which was renamed Department of Labor in 1994) was responsible for providing white-collar jobs and career guidance services exclusively for white people. Black labor was controlled through restrictions of free movements of black workers, which restricted movement and access to employment only reserved for the whites.

The services offered to whites by the Department of Human Resources prior to 1990 included:

- Individual career guidance services using the evaluation by psychometric instruments that tested skills, interests, values as well as interviews. It focused on students aged 16 or older to help them choose tertiary studies.
- Career counseling services for people with disabilities to help them choose appropriate courses that were funded by the Department of Disability Scholarship Plan.
- The publication of *My Career*, information guide of university careers.
- “The Mentor”, counseling of the computer and information careers.
- The development and standardization of a departmental fitness test battery, known as the Manpower Fitness Test Battery.
- Career adjustment services for government officials who had problems with their jobs in the Public Service.

These services were exclusively for white students and nothing for blacks; causing much confusion among professionals. This confusion is part of the white assertion in which career guidance, introduced for the first time in the 1930s in South Africa, was the privilege of whites (Dovey, 1983). Therefore, they protect this privilege to this day, but in subtle ways. Career guidance was foreign to the black child and an instrument of the government of apartheid to subjugate the black students. Consequently, there was great abandonment of the discipline in the black schools which affects the education system until today. Career guidance in the black schools exacerbated even more the discrimination of the black child. According to Govender (2016, p. 247), "inequality persists and is increasing". This scenario also exists in the professionalization of career guidance. Due to the high quality of requirements for entering this field, black candidates encounter many challenges. First of all, the quality of education they received in high school did not adequately prepare them to enter high-quality careers, as predicted by Verwoerd. Through the democratic government in 1994, South Africa took a stand on career development as a generic concept that covers the political imperative for career guidance, counseling and information, through the introduction of a national system of career development (Keevy et al., 2012).

Career development is seen as a lifelong inclusive process, "the total constellation of economic, sociological, psychological, educational, physical, and random factors that shape the career" (Sears, 1982: 139). However, there is still great confusion in South Africa (Maree & Westhuizen, 2011); universities, curriculum, practice and research emphasize career counseling, while the social context emphasizes career guidance, and policy focuses on career development (Sefotho, 2017: n. p). Those who offer these services also appear to be confused and there are always conflicts about the scope of practice.

At present, in the educational psychology programs, more white students are found accessing places to study in the Universities. In this field, professionals are mostly white, who may not understand the different cultures of the black populations. Many of these professionals:

[...] open private psychology businesses, that is, only the people with resources access their services. Therefore, most black people do not have access to career guidance services. Among the eleven official languages of South Africa, only English and Afrikaans are, for the most part, languages used in therapy and psychological services (Sefotho, 2017: n. p).

However, most students, not using English as their first language, are having difficulty communicating in this language (Maree & Westhuizen, 2011). The tests are in general not from South Africa, which overall, results in harm to children subjected to these. Added to this, the lack of services marginalizes black people, which amount to educational inequality and social injustice (Fiske & Ladd, 2006).

## **Towards a new direction**

With a shift from the apartheid government to democracy, black people entered a difficult period. For the most part, the changes were mainly emotional and perhaps not good for the country; for example, drastic changes in the education system, removing everything related to apartheid, including school guidance and putting career guidance under Life Orientation as a non-examinable subject. In this regard, Sean Jones states:

[...] Career guidance remains a poorly developed competence in our society “because” as of From 1967, guidance was a compulsory subject in white schools, and in 1981, guidance teachers were appointed in Black schools as part of reforms aimed at quelling rising Black unrest. (Nzeleni, 2015: 24).

But, the black teachers were not trained in the field of career guidance, so they lack correct and adequate preparation in these fields.

## **The new direction**

The new educational direction should be toward a vision of social justice (Fledderman, 2011). The government commissioned the Minister of higher education and training to create a system that is in line with the needs of the people in their diversity. South Africa is the most diverse country in the world, but the development of career guidance services is scarce, yet it is important for the government to implement the change project with awareness and morality (Watson, 2010). This new vision had as its starting point to combat fragmentation in the field of career guidance:

In 2012, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), in collaboration with The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), assumed leadership and development a policy framework for the management and access of information and services of career development in South Africa (SAQA, 2012: 8).

The year before in 2011, the International Career Guidance Conference was held in South Africa for the first time on the African continent, as a fundamental step in the development of the discourse on career guidance.

In 2012, the Framework for Cooperation in the provision of Career Development (Information, Advice and Guidance) Services in South Africa was developed. To avoid any confusion in relation to important concepts, it was decided to settle for “Career Development” which includes lifelong guidance for learning and work and relates to the political agendas linked to the lifelong learning, development and social inclusion.

To avoid errors of interpretation or confusion, Du Toit and Van Zyl (2012) clarify that:

In terms of career information, guidance and counselling, the National Curriculum Statement Grades R to 12 (January 2012) and the Curriculum and Assessment

Policy Statement for Life Orientation Grades 10 to 12 (January 2012) are relevant. The National Curriculum Statement Grades R to 12 makes provision for a subject called "Life Skills" in the foundation, intermediate and senior phases of school. This subject consists of the following themes: beginning knowledge (only in the foundation phase); and creative arts, physical education, and social and personal wellbeing (in all the phases). The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for Life Orientation Grades 10 to 12 provides the framework for career development during the last three years of school. Career development is one of six topics (called "careers and career choices") in the subject called "Life Orientation" (p. 30).

In good faith, the government does its best to resolve social injustice that resulted from apartheid. The education system is one of the most complex in the country, due to its diversity but also, fundamentally, because it continues to suffer inequality. Although career counseling appears to be a government priority, policy implementation takes a long time. Today, there are the following models and documents about policies related to career guidance:

1. Framework for Cooperation in the provision of Career Development (Information, Advice and Guidance) Services in South Africa (2012).
2. Competency Framework for Career Development Practitioners in South Africa (2015).

Therefore, the curriculum is expected to cover career development under the following areas:

**Table 1. Types of training**

Provider – Proveedor	Type - Tipo	
Higher Education Educación Superior	Career Counselling Consejería de Carrera	Career Guidance Orientación Profesional
General and Further Education and Training Formación general y posterior	Career Guidance Orientación profesional	Life Orientation Orientación de la vida Learner Support Apoyo al alumno
Trades and Occupations	Career development Desarrollo profesional	Career pathing Carrera profesional

## Youth unemployment

Youth unemployment is an international problem. The global forecast indicates that there will be vulnerable employment of 1.4 billion people in 2018 (International

Labor Organization, 2017). The situation of young people is still growing fast and they are most affected because “they do not have enough networks to obtain information about employment opportunities, as well as financial resources and mobility to look for work” (Yu, 2013: 545). In South Africa, unemployment is often linked to poverty among the majority of young blacks as a result of apartheid (Van der Berg, 2011). It also exists among young people with university qualifications, even though they were studying with the goal of finding work. Mncayi and Dunga point out that:

A graduate's employment prospects seem to depend on the specific degree qualification held rather than merely on the achievement of a tertiary qualification [...] available jobs are outweighed by the number of graduates coming out of universities every year ... It may therefore be that graduate unemployment is at least partly a function of uninformed career choices (2016: 414).

My experience of four years also shows that youths from less-resourced, low-income contexts had no opportunities to take advantage of counseling services. It is not clear why not? The government has developed many support programs such as *Ketha*, which means; choose, and a telephone or Internet-based approach called the Help Desk for Professional Counseling (Flederman, 2011). The most important program in terms of scope appears to be radio. However, it seems that these services do not reach young people in their contexts, just as the government expected. Therefore, Mncayi and Dunga indicate that: “Perhaps, then, the career guidance services offered are not well adapted to the needs of the students” (2016: 414). Based on this, Maree (2009) considers that there is a lack of vision in the field of career guidance. I then review the counseling services in South Africa.

### **Career development services**

According to SAQA (2012, p. 9), career development services offered in South Africa are found in the following areas:

- I) Schools — General Education and Training (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET);
- II) FET colleges;
- III) Higher education and training institutions (universities and universities of technology);
- IV) Public employment services;
- V) Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs);
- VI) Statutory bodies;
- VII) Non-governmental services;
- VIII) Private services.

With this number of providers, it is not clear who offers what kind of services, so there is a lot of confusion. For a long time, there was no policy on career guidance.

Now that there is policy, what remains is to demarcate and clarify areas of service provision according to the providers and the ethical guidelines they must adhere to. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), focuses on Information Advice and Guidance, following the career guidance model of England. The question is: what does it mean for South Africa, especially for career guidance providers? This article presents many challenges facing the career guidance field. It is clear that much still remains to be done for there to be social justice in this field.

### Innovative models

Researchers who are very knowledgeable and involved in the field of career development have developed new models - such as Maree and Van DerWesthuizen (2011) - emphasizing the transformation and indigenization of psychology in South Africa (Ebersöhn, 2012). Contemporary discourse follows postmodernism (Maree & Beck, 2004), a philosophy that supports the variety of truth: that there is not one truth for all, but that we all have what is truth according to our point of view. The new model of career orientation is for post-modernity (Maree et al., 2008), a new era. These researchers also warn that it will be "a difficult road to hope" (Maree & Molepo, 2004: 47). This road to hope is a pathway towards social justice, which heals and opens routes to the world of equality and the world of decent work for all. One of the paths opened was the founding of the Pace Career Center (PACE) in 1991 with the goal of providing information on career guidance services. The PACE model manages to reach students in less developed communities over many other programs (Pace Career Center, 2017).

Another model was developed by the Department of Higher Education based on the concept of *Khetha* - which means to choose - that is in IsiZulu and Sesotho; two of the eleven official languages of South Africa. *Khetha* written the same and mean the same thing in these languages (Bransony et al., 2015). According to Singh (2016), *Khetha* is an online campaign to help choose a career and is an advanced way for post-school young people, who need a lot of career guidance.

### Methodology

The methodology that informed this article was qualitative-phenomenological (Lin, 2013), illuminated by postmodern philosophy (Diéguez, 2006), the constructivist-interpretative paradigm (Thanh & Thanh, 2015) and auto ethnographic case design. In the ethnographic field, the researcher's narrative was followed; which facilitates the use of my own experience with the goal of politicizing the human experience and the search for the social sense of experiences of the students who participate in career fairs (Ellis et al., 2011). Self-reflection was the basic way of collecting data and formulating the themes of this study. Reflection (Langer et al., 2007) was about my experiences

at the career fairs that I have given for four years and how they contribute to the development of innovative models for a provision of socially just career guidance that responds to the needs of students of schools in less-resourced communities. I also analyzed documents, trade show reports (Bowen, 2009) and notes and photographs of what I observed (Mulhall, 2002); visual ethnography (Schwartz, 1989), with no interference from camera use with natural phenomena. As I pondered, I took notes and recorded them in my book or on my cell phone.

## **Data analysis**

The transcription of data was done by the researcher in a space of three weeks. The data were analyzed according to the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (AFI) because these are ideal types for stories or narratives, thoughts and emotions about personal experiences (Palmer et al., 2010). The AFI “seeks” to give voice to “the phenomenon” of research (Wagstaff et al., 2014: 2), in this case, the career fair. I read the transcripts several times and wrote notes of what caught my attention in the margin of the page, following the ideographic method of analysis suggested by Smith, Jarman and Osborne (1999). In the first step, I searched for transcription issues then, “look for connections between preliminary topics to develop general themes” (Smith et al., 1999: 222). In the end, the following three themes emerged: career fairs provide beneficial information, community empowerment brings sustainability and lack of harmonization in career guidance.

## **Results**

I present the results of these themes briefly. Qualitative research usually presents results in the form of topics, so that the narratives or stories of the participants are evidenced. In this ideographic case, themes emerged in this study case and were formed from reflections, observations and analysis of documents, as well as photographs.

### ***Career fairs provide beneficial information***

My experience with career fairs for more than ten years has indicated that they are beneficial for less-resources students where there is insufficient media coverage, as well as the internet and radio. Fairs are used as the vehicle for sharing information directly with students. It is a special day in which students have the opportunity to listen to different exponents talk about different topics related to the world of work. First, the rationale is to talk about the curriculum and match subject to types of careers. Then follows the talk about the sense of self, the issue that relates the character and outstanding abilities one possesses. Sharing the information about the universities in the country and what programs they offer is crucial. There is also information about financial departments and relevant requirements to help students. Fairs encourage future



students who build their careers according to the needs of themselves, employers and the labor market. In order to reach young people who are not in school, it is important to follow the model of *careers on the street*, since many who attended that event said that they benefited because many times nobody takes them into account, although it is necessary that they have the opportunity to think about their careers.

### ***Community Empowerment Brings Sustainability***

From the fairs, we have developed support programs for the community. First we start with the teachers, who remain with the students after the career fair event. Many times, teachers report that they also use to think and rethink about their careers. They did not have the opportunity to be oriented and, therefore, some feel that they are in wrong careers. But based on what they learn from fairs, they will be able to help students better than before, while they think about how they will improve their careers as well.

The other part of the community fundamental to our program, pertains to the workers of community libraries. As service centers, libraries need to know how to help students look for important information. We had the first training this year (2017), where participants developed web pages where they will communicate with the students and put important information about careers. Those who participated made a lot of sense and expressed great satisfaction about the support. We have also invited community leaders to fairs, as well as important people, with the eagerness to develop their communities and help students to succeed.

### ***Lack of harmonization in vocational guidance***

The reflection I have had led me to the lack of harmonization of career guidance in South Africa. It is difficult to follow the thread from basic education and what has to happen in relation to guidance. The lack of career guidance policy was largely the basis of the problem of disharmony. Many providers of counseling services do their own thing and it is not easy to disaggregate who offers what kind of service. In the same way, it is not easy to implement the career guidance curriculum, because it is not clear what is the focus of career psychology in South Africa.

## **Discussion of the results**

The process of career guidance is often between a counselor and an individual or small groups. Thus, it is assumed that those who can attend these sessions become successful in choosing careers. In South Africa, most students in less-resourced communities do not have the means to attend counseling sessions, although they do need it. Most marginalized schools do not have teachers trained to provide counseling services. Nor are there psychologists in such schools. One of the most feasible ways to reach these students is through career fairs. Career fairs are an alternative to the lack of services in remote schools. The advantage is that, in a single day, the reach is greater than what one does with individuals or small groups. Most libraries in less-re-

sourced communities do not have information about careers. Many of them have book donations which often have no relation to the country's context or curriculum. During the fairs, we share information relevant to the entrance to the universities, the subjects that are there, the financial support that can be found and other information to support the students.

It is important that the community be part of those who attend fairs to learn about careers. In this sense, it may be helpful for parents to support their children in the choice, because sometimes it is the parents themselves who become barriers when their children choose careers. Once they have the appropriate information, it is possible to make appropriate decisions, but especially in supporting the children.

Community leaders are also relevant to the career fairs project in less-resourced communities. The staff of the community libraries plays a central role, since it allows continuation of providing the information, even for the young people who do not attend the fairs. It is important that community library workers have workshops on the dissemination of information using technology and the internet. Thus, they can help many people at a distance.

The lack of harmonization in the field of career guidance is global, but it is deeper in some countries. Disharmonization is a disadvantage in a country as complex as South Africa, so it is urgent to harmonize career guidance in the curriculum, subjects in schools, universities and other spaces. Suppliers must also regulate their provision of services for the control and observation of professional ethics. It is necessary to think of guidance teachers in South Africa because most do not have the proper training and harmonization is also much needed in the field of psychology in general. There is no doubt that education; provision of services in a transdisciplinary way, can be a great advantage for all instead of fighting between sister disciplines for a greater impact of career guidance intervention (Miles & Naidoo, 2017).

South Africa is a country where most young people are trapped in unemployment, although many of them finished their university degrees. In the spirit of social justice, it should be noted that this situation could be seen as an opportunity to *re-train*, in a special and specific way, young unemployed people in the areas of guidance to create employment and, at the same time, to help less-resourced communities. It also seems relevant to develop entrepreneurship among young people. In the revised curriculum, it will be vital to emphasize how important it is to think about innovation and job creation among young people and that government programs favor such a context.

## Conclusion

In this article, I tried to reflect on career guidance in my South Africa. The trajectory of this field was one of separation and discrimination between the whites and blacks, always favoring the former. The basis of the educational system was a political phenomenon led by the apartheid system, whose consequence was the exclusion of the black child and less development of services aimed at him. Career guidance requires

a great turnaround and a lot of work to change attitudes, systems and curriculum. There is also a need for harmonization of career guidance in the curriculum of primary, secondary, high school, universities and other institutions. This work demonstrated the problems of career guidance, but also pointed out the opportunities that exist, especially, for unemployed youth. In conclusion, it is assumed that the harmonization of the field of psychology, especially career guidance, has the potential to alleviate the social injustice resulting from South African political changes.